

VZCZCXYZ0040
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHPE #0033/01 0081746
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
R 081746Z JAN 10
FM AMEMBASSY LIMA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0478
INFO RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC
RHMFISS/CDR USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL
RUEHAC/AMEMBASSY ASUNCION
RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
RUEHBU/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS
RUEHGE/AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO
RUEHSG/AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC

C O N F I D E N T I A L LIMA 000033

SIPDIS
DRL ALSO FOR GMAGGIO

E.O. 12958: DECL: 2020/01/08
TAGS: [SOCI](#) [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PE](#)
SUBJECT: BLOODY BAGUA PHOTO HIGHLIGHTS UNRESOLVED ISSUES

REF: 09 LIMA 1010; 09 LIMA 1124; 09 LIMA 1380 AND PREVIOUS

CLASSIFIED BY: Alexis Ludwig, PolCouns, U.S. Department of State,
Political; REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

¶1. (C) Summary: A grisly photo of a missing police officer surrounded by his indigenous captors - widely published in Peruvian media -- has revived deep emotions over what happened during June 5 violence in Peru's Amazon region (refs), and rekindled debate over who is to blame. The picture appears to show enraged indigenous warriors clearly intending to harm Bazan (who was never accounted for after the violence but presumed killed). Some observers believe the government conveniently "placed" the photo in the wake of an official report on the Bagua violence (septel) to buttress its contention that police were the main victims of the violence. We believe the graphic image suggests that there was, at the very least, blame on all sides. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) June 5 violence in Bagua, in which 24 police and 10 civilians were killed, represents the single greatest crisis faced by the Garcia administration to date. Immediately following the release of a government commission report on the violence (septel), practically every major Peruvian daily carried on its front page January 7 a sensationalist photo, taken last June, of a staggering but still-alive Police Major Felipe Bazan being dragged by a group of native Indians. The photo has graphically revived still raw emotions swirling around the violence and rekindled debate about who was to blame. It also reinforces for some the stereotype of indigenous "savagery".

¶3. (SBU) The picture shows Bazan's captors in war paint and carrying spears, while the police officer's bloodied face shows signs of a severe beating. Various headlines cried out: "Barbarism", "In Cold Blood" and "It was a Brutal and Savage Crime". The image was reportedly taken from a video obtained by the Interior Ministry depicting events at the "Devil's Curve" clash on June 5 and, according to official accounts, released to the public to aid in the ongoing search for Bazan's missing body. Police believe that the policeman was brutally murdered and his body dumped in the nearby Marañon River; according to the press, several indigenous protestors have acknowledged his murder and disposing of his body.

¶4. (C) Some observers suggest the GOP provided the sensationalist photo of Bazan to the media - seven months after the fact -- in order to bolster its case in the wake of a recently-published official report on Bagua, that police were the primary victims of the violence. The Peruvian Government has been on the defensive ever since initial reports, provided by NGOs and others immediately after the violence, asserted that the police had massacred numerous native people on June 5. Feeding this perception, Aidesep leader Alberto Pizango also characterized the Bagua violence to the media as government-provoked "genocide." Amidst the early confusion on the ground, these reports were then picked up by international media and disseminated world-wide, and included exaggerated accounts of "hundreds" of native people killed, buried in mass graves or thrown into a nearby river. This erroneous and one-sided version of a confusing situation was later contradicted by the fact that more than twice as many police as civilians were killed during the violence. The graphic depiction of Bazan also appears to challenge the view that Bagua was a simple case of heavy-handed government repression.

¶5. (C) Comment: There is sometimes more, or less, to a photo than meets the eye. This is certainly the case with the wrenching photo of commander Bazan. Nevertheless, we believe it shows that Bagua was something different than a simple clash between good vs. evil,

or a repressive government facing down innocent indigenous people (refs). At the very least, the photo suggests that, whatever the broader context, there was blame to share on all sides.

MCKINLEY